

Baby Fae: Clouded legacy 10 years later

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Christina Falloon gets teary-eyed when she describes how her 5 1/2-year-old daughter Krysta recently scored the first goal of the season for her soccer team. "If it weren't for Baby Fae, my daughter wouldn't be here today," said the 31-year-old mother from Buellton, whose daughter received a human heart transplant in 1988 that saved the 3-week-old girl's life. "We're grateful for that baby. It's sad

she didn't make it." Baby Fae was the 12-day-old infant who on Oct. 26, 1984 — 10 years ago Wednesday — received a walnut-size baboon heart in an operation at Loma Linda University Medical Center, 60 miles from Los Angeles. The first infant to receive an animal organ survived 20 1/2 days; her full name was never released. In the decade since Baby Fae's death, the science of suppressing rejection has advanced and hu-

man-to-human transplants have been fine-tuned to where patients are surviving longer. At the same time, Americans have been forced to consider the limits of medicine, the ethics of subjecting a newborn to experimental surgery, the phenomenon of living with an organ from another species and questions of animal rights. During Baby Fae's brief life, people were fascinated and horrified by the prospect of an ani-

mal organ enabling her to overcome a fatal heart defect. But deep within her body, forces Dr. Leonard Bailey still hadn't conquered were working against his surgical handiwork. Bailey, who was accused of making a premature leap across the species barrier, believes he knows enough now to avoid the pitfall of Baby Fae's transplant. It wasn't organ rejection but incompatible blood types that took her life.

"The important legacy which is she stimulated the other babies could be transplanted well," Bailey said. "We've been able to create a new form of therapy for severe heart disease in infants as a result of her legacy." In the intervening years, Bailey has transplanted human hearts into 250 babies, 170 under 6 months. Loma Linda says 85 percent are alive today.

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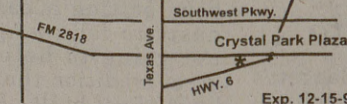
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